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Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6577th meeting

Friday, 8 July 2011, 10.15 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Wittig	(Germany)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ms. Čolaković
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mrs. Bongo
	India	Mr. Vinay Kumar
	Lebanon	Mr. Assaf
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zhukov
	South Africa	Mr. Mashabane
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Mr. Grant

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2011/388)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2011/388)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa, to participate in this meeting.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/388, containing the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Djinnit.

Mr. Djinnit (*spoke in French*): It is my honour to present the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) from 1 January to 30 June.

Since my most recent briefing to the Security Council in December 2010 (see S/PV.6455), the situation in West Africa has seen some positive developments. The post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, which was so drawn out and consumed a great deal of energy, was finally ended by the international community's support and cooperation between the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union.

Following the welcome outcome of the Guinean crisis, constitutional order was restored in Niger following the organization of presidential elections that were deemed to be credible and transparent. The successful transition in Niger is clearly to the credit of the country's political class, leaders and civil society. In this respect, I wish to commend the former head of the transition, Mr. Salou Djibo, who kept his word and acted with the necessary resolve to see the transition through.

The support and resolute accompaniment of the international community to these countries emerging from crisis must be pursued in order to consolidate the significant progress that has been made. The invitation extended to those three countries to the Group of Eight summit in Deauville in May and the political and financial decisions taken at that time sent a strong message of support.

With respect to Niger, I am pleased to note the resumption of its democratic experience, which was unfortunately interrupted during the crisis, and the resources that have been made available to it will allow it in time to become a symbol of political and economic success so long as it continues to enjoy regional and international support in meeting the human security challenges ahead. In this regard, I echo the appeal launched by President Mahamadou Issoufou to the United Nations and all Niger's partners for assistance in ending the chronic food insecurity from which that country has suffered too long. I encourage Member States and the United Nations system to respond favourably to President Issoufou's request for the organization of a high-level conference on food and nutritional security that he hopes to hold in Niger by November.

The positive developments in the subregion over the past six months were also confirmed by the fact that a number of countries have been able to organize credible elections and overcome the threats of electoral crises that would have had destabilizing consequences. Benin was therefore able to muster the necessary resolve to overcome profound political divisions over the electoral process that endanger national stability and cohesion. Moreover, Nigeria held general elections that represented a significant step forward for democracy. That success, which was lauded by the Secretary-General during his recent visit to Nigeria, will make it possible for that country to continue to play its most welcome role as a leader in peacebuilding and security within West Africa and beyond. In all of those cases, I am happy to say that the partnership that has developed among the United Nations, ECOWAS and the African Union was crucial for the success of the electoral processes.

While there is much to celebrate in those important steps forward, stability in West Africa is

nevertheless fragile and many challenges remain, as well as threats to peace, security and development in the region. Instability associated with elections continues to be a significant challenge, especially when we consider the number of elections to be held in West Africa in the next few years. In Guinea, several initiatives are under way to meet the population's needs and to lay the groundwork for economic recovery. However, additional efforts will be needed to diffuse tension and promote the widest possible consensus with regard to preparations for the legislative elections that are to be held before the end of 2011.

As for the elections planned between now and 2013 in West Africa, drawing lessons from the elections that have just taken place, with the aim of preventing political tensions tied to elections, last May UNOWA organized in Praia a high-level regional conference on elections and stability. The goal of the conference, which was organized with the whole host of United Nations partners, including ECOWAS, was to encourage momentum to catalyze efforts at all levels to create the conditions necessary for peaceful elections in the subregion. Our hope is that the Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa, adopted at the conference, will contribute to generating that momentum.

Efforts to consolidate the recent progress in West Africa should not overshadow defence and security issues that too often have played a negative role, contrary to efforts aimed at promoting democratic governance. UNOWA will continue to work very closely with ECOWAS in the area of security sector reform in order to develop a regional strategy and implement the reforms already undertaken in Guinea and in any other country of the subregion where such an undertaking would be useful.

In addition, I cannot fail to mention the positive role played by women in the prevention of conflict and the resolution of crises in West Africa. It is often through women's sacrifice and suffering that opportunities for crisis resolution emerge, as we saw in the sad events in Conakry on 28 September. In that spirit, UNOWA will continue to promote initiatives to help women in the subregion, in keeping with the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

The range of actions undertaken to promote security and stability in the subregion will only produce results if the scourges of drug trafficking and organized crime, which further weaken already fragile State institutions in West Africa, are not diligently and forcefully fought. As the Council is aware, in 2008 ECOWAS put in place a regional action plan to combat illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa. It is important to further mobilize political leaders and civil society in order to help the countries of the subregion to deal with this threat to peace and stability, above and beyond the obvious public health consequences if the growing trend in drug use continues.

It is with that goal in mind that UNOWA, working with ECOWAS, will continue to mobilize the various stakeholders, particularly within the framework of the West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI), whose political committee held its first meeting on 20 June in Dakar. UNOWA, through its presidency of the committee, will work to promote WACI as the spearhead for the implementation of the ECOWAS action plan.

I would like to address the impact of the Libya crisis on West Africa. Although their magnitude is not yet fully known, concerns have already been expressed that the humanitarian and security consequences of this crisis could worsen the chronic instability in the subregion, particularly in the countries of the Sahel. Officials from the subregion, particularly the President of Niger, whom I recently met with in Niamey, have voiced serious concerns about the genuine and potential implications that the crisis could have for the Sahel. Beyond the social and economic impact on the subregion of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, the countries of the Sahel, especially Mali and Niger, must cope with the return of thousands of migrants from Libya. Most of those migrants sought refuge in areas of those countries that were already affected by underdevelopment and the insecurity resulting from the activities of terrorist groups and traffickers operating there.

Furthermore, a significant increase in arms and explosives in circulation in Niger, Mali and the Sahel Strip in general has been noted by the countries affected, which have expressed serious concern about those arms and explosives falling into the hands of terrorists operating in the region. If we are not careful, the increase in the number of weapons in circulation in the subregion could spark a new wave of instability within the countries of the Sahel. In that context, we

welcome the re-launching of regional cooperation among the countries of the Sahel to address common threats to security, particularly from terrorism.

Worsening living conditions and the high rate of youth unemployment, exacerbated by tensions related to electoral competition for power, pose additional risks to stability. Those conditions create a breeding ground for recurring disputes and tensions affecting the countries of the subregion, especially in an environment in which the legitimate aspirations of the people for progress and change are being frustrated.

That phenomenon is made worse by the impact of events seen in certain North African countries. No country of the subregion is immune from such turmoil, as we saw recently in Burkina Faso, a country that has had a long period of stability, and Senegal, a country with a long-standing democratic tradition. These latest developments confirm, if confirmation were needed, that there is a need to comprehensively address the issues of development, governance and security in the countries of the subregion. Despite their commendable efforts to promote development and stability, they continue to be vulnerable and fragile. They therefore deserve the determined and steadfast support of the international community.

In conclusion, let me express my gratitude to the Security Council for the interest it continues to show in the situation in the subregion and for the support it provides to the United Nations Office for West Africa.

The President: I thank Mr. Djinnit for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.